

BIOGRAPHICAL SUMMARY: Yoshitaka Takashiba, 68, macadamia nut and coffee farmer

"The legislature declared Kona is a disaster area so they appropriate some money for Kona disaster area and they had loans available for the farmers . . . but we were trained in such [a way] that if we were to get government support it's a kind of a shame to the family. So, that was the Japan style, I think. So, very few people did apply for the loan. . . . So, our county agent Mr. Hiroshige . . . he got really mad with us, . . . and with his coaching a lot of the farmers applied for the loan and I was one of them. . . ."

Yoshitaka Takashiba, the son of immigrants from Fukui-ken, Japan, was born on May 23, 1913, in Captain Cook, Kona, Hawaii. As a youth, Yoshitaka helped on the family coffee farm and attended Konawaena School.

In 1927, at the age of 14, he quit school to assume more responsibilities on the farm. In 1933, he married Chiyoko, and three years later, began growing and marketing tomatoes to supplement their income.

In 1945, he started macadamia nut seedlings which he eventually planted in the fields three years later. Since that time, he has increased his role in macadamia nut growing and processing. From 1961 to 1980, Yoshitaka supervised macadamia nut processing operations at three farmers' cooperatives.

Three years ago, he purchased his 9.6 acres of macadamia nut lands, which he continues to farm today. A member of the Kona Lions Club, Kona Farm Bureau, and Kona Hongwanji, Yoshitaka remains active in community and farm affairs.

Tape No. 9-50-1-81

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

with

Yoshitaka Takashiba (YT)

January 23, 1981

Captain Cook, Hawaii

BY: Michiko Kodama (MK)

MK: This is an interview with Mr. Yoshitaka Takashiba at his home in Captain Cook, Kona, Hawaii on January 23, 1981. Mr. Takashiba, could you tell me when you were born?

YT: May 23, 1913.

MK: And where were you born?

YT: At Captain Cook.

MK: And you were telling me that it's not right here that you were born. You were born a little bit higher than this area?

YT: Yeah. I guess about a mile above the present location.

MK: How many brothers and sisters do you have in your family?

YT: Three brothers and one sister.

MK: In terms of the ranking [i.e., order of birth] of the children, what number were you?

YT: I'm the number one.

MK: You're a nisei, so I was wondering, when and why did your father, Mr. Koshu Takashiba come to Kona?

YT: That I don't know why. But I think there's some movement that they wanted to go outside of Japan to earn some money and according to what my parents were saying, originally the intention was to move to, go to Canada but with some circumstances they were forced to stay in Hawaii.

MK: I think you were telling me that your father was looking for a relative in Canada?

YT: Probably relative too but I think there was a priest from Fukui-ken that went to Canada so they were sort of looking forward to going near the priest.

MK: What year did your father come to Kona?

YT: I have no idea when my father came to Kona but my mother, according to the passport, she's been here August 10, 1912. So probably my father was here someplace around 1910 or 1909, I guess.

MK: You were telling me that they both came from Fukui-ken?

YT: That's right.

MK: What type of work were they involved in, in that area?

YT: As a farmer.

MK: Do you know what type of farming they were doing?

YT: Mostly rice, I guess.

MK: What type of work were they doing in Kona?

YT: In Kona they were engaged in coffee farming.

MK: And where were they farming their coffee?

YT: At that time that they arrived?

MK: Yes.

YT: At the time that they arrived they were farming close by where I was born. Before I was born they moved to the place where I was born which is just about half a mile from the place where originally they started farming.

MK: And that land that they were farming, was it leased land?

YT: Yes, it was leased from Arthur Greenwell.

MK: I don't know if you have this information but did you know the terms of the lease that your parents had for that land?

YT: At that time, I think it was about 15 years term, I think. Of course, the reason why I know that is my father used to go down to Greenwell's home for further negotiation in renewal of the lease.

MK: Would you know about how much he was paying for the lease?

YT: I have no idea.

MK: How large was the land?

YT: Five acres.

MK: Were there coffee trees already growing on the land when your parents bought it?

YT: As far as I remember the coffee was there.

MK: Again, I don't know if you have this information but, would you know how they managed to get enough money to start the coffee farm?

YT: That, I don't know.

MK: At that time, when you were a child and your parents were doing the farming, what kind of work was needed to just maintain the coffee crop?

YT: For the weed control we used to go around and hoe the land and we fertilized and we used to trim the branch once a year. In trimming, this was at the high elevation so the coffee tree was topped, not as you see lately around here. It's all topped and some of the people used to call that umbrella tree because it looked like umbrellas. The height of the tree was about six feet high and then the whole tree was, the formation, was round so the lateral was pruned off. After the year's production of coffee that lateral will stretch further out so we used to cut that lateral after one year's production and keep the tree such that the diameter of the tree would not exceed more than five to six feet.

MK: That pruning that you did, when was that done, what time of the year?

YT: I think we used to prune that around April, May, I think.

MK: And you mentioned fertilizing. At that time, what kind of fertilizing did you folks do?

YT: At that time, I don't know what kind of fertilizer they used to apply. But we used to have fertilizer called bone meal which the Japanese called bone meal. But I don't know what the formula was. But during my teenage the university started doing some experiment of the analysis of the fertilizer that the coffee needs so we had offered one plot to the university to do such experiment. And in our orchard they had that fertilizer experiment done. And after that experiment was done the formula of the coffee fertilizer was determined and from then on they called that "Coffee cherry." The formula was 10-5-20. They had slightly different ingredients in the fertilizer for the higher elevation and the lower elevation. So they had the fertilizer called, "Coffee cherry mauka, Coffee cherry makai."

MK: Before you were a teenager, did the experimental station or the county extension service come and help your parents with the farm?

YT: I don't know when the experiment station got in action in Kona but before that, I think, no such, what do you call, effort was made by the university, I think. But after the experiment station was formed in Kona then many times the farmer doubtful then he'll go down the experiment station and ask information. And from there on the university did some experiment to find the answer what the local people ask the question.

MK: And then before this experiment station and the university got involved, how did your father and mother know how to fertilize or how to prune?

YT: Well, on the pruning I think the Japanese people sort of experimented their own way. On the pruning system, they found out that if they have all the vertical on the high elevation, the vertical would grow so fast and rigid so the picking was the problem. They cannot bend the coffee branches as they want to. And another thing was that too many foliage was grown, you know, too many leaves were developed on the high elevation because of the less sunlight that they have. So to counter that problem they, few of them tried that top system. And then it was promising. But the top system required a lot of pruning labor because it took a person to prune forty trees per day. But on the other conventional way you can prune five acres within probably about ten days.

MK: You needed a lot of labor then?

YT: So, eventually the person, the farmers who were farming on the higher elevation, when the coffee price came low they couldn't afford to do that. So either they move or went out and secured some job outside. But at the time the job outside was very, very scarce so we were forced to stay in the land and do the best out of the land.

MK: You mentioned like for pruning you would take out one man and he would take a certain amount of time to do the work, when you were small, who did all the work on the coffee farm?

YT: Occasionally on the pruning time my parents used to hire one or two persons and most of the pruning was done by the family.

MK: In those times, from about what time to what time were you involved in coffee farm work?

YT: You mean myself?

MK: Mm hmm.

YT: During the weekend and holidays.

MK: And the regular days you were just going to school?

YT: That's right.

MK: Nowadays you hear about different insect problems or weather problems for growing coffee, how about back then, during the time you were a child, were there times when you remembered certain pests or weather problems at the farm?

YT: As far as our farm, we didn't have any problem of that sort but we used to hear that on the lower elevation during the dry season they used to have this problem of fungus. I don't know what the name of the fungus is but all the leaves were covered with black fungus and that used to sort of kill the coffee tree. Lately we don't see that kind of fungus on the coffee tree.

MK: After the coffee came to bear the cherries, who did the picking on your farm?

YT: The family did the picking and if the family was not able to pick then we used to hire pickers.

MK: Even during picking season you didn't work during the regular week?

YT: Well, yeah, because I used to go to school and so just on the vacation days we used to pick coffee.

MK: You mentioned that some people were hired, what kind of people were hired?

YT: At that time that we were farming on that higher elevation we had a Filipino family working for us and if the Filipino family wasn't able to pick all the coffee then we asked that family to get some hired hands. So mostly, in fact, all the hired hands were Filipino. Then a lot of the Japanese families were seeking for jobs so whenever we have to hire pickers then first thing we look for is a family [that] is real close to us and if they cannot then we go to the next family. We were trying to help each other in that kind of situation where they need money. Then we hire them so, in turn, we were hired by the other families when their season was on. So on the higher elevation the coffee season came out, coffee season was let's see, May, June, July, I think. Then on the lower section was September to about December.

MK: So when your coffee wasn't in season you could go pick other families' coffee?

YT: Right, right.

MK: And then when their coffee was in season they would help you?

YT: Mm hmm. (Telephone rings.)

MK: When you're harvesting then, you have some Japanese families sometimes and your family and the Filipino family, yeah?

YT: That's right.

MK: That Filipino family, were they living on the same land with your family?

YT: Yeah, we had one employee's home so they used to live in that house.

MK: And in those days, what was the compensation for the pickers?

YT: I cannot remember in details but the last that I remember was about seventy-five cents per bag and we used to hear that they were paid fifty cents per bag before that. Then that increased to \$1.25 and I remember that when I started taking over the orchard we were paying \$1.25 per bag.

MK: And how about the housing and other things like lighting, the kerosene, and that sort of thing, were they provided with that, too, by your family?

YT: Kerosene, sometimes we did supply them but the housing was free. And there was no electricity at that time so kerosene, once in a while, we used to supply them.

MK: Did this family come back to you every year?

YT: You mean the Filipino family?

MK: Mm hmm [Yes].

YT: The Filipino family that used to stay in my house used to work right through, throughout the year for us.

MK: So they were helping with the maintenance of the crop, too, then?

YT: Yeah.

MK: And did they have to seek work outside of your folks' farm to support themselves?

YT: At the time that I was managing the orchard, no, they used to work full time for me.

MK: Then after the coffee was harvested, picked by the Filipino family, your family, how was it processed?

YT: All our leases around our section was sub-leased from Captain Cook so our coffee was contracted to Captain Cook Coffee Mill.

MK: And so Captain Cook would be take parchment coffee or cherry coffee?

YT: Cherry coffee.

MK: And those days, how was the arrangement for the transportation of the coffee down to Captain Cook Mill?

YT: I couldn't remember that wagon station but the very start was that they used to haul the coffee on the wagon. I slightly remember that we were hitchhiking on that wagon once in a while. But I don't really remember their hauling coffee on the wagon but at the very start they were using the wagon. Then after that I remember that they had a truck coming over to haul the coffee.

MK: And in those days how did the Captain Cook Coffee Mill know when to come to pick up the coffee?

YT: During the season they used to come almost every day to pick up the coffee. During the off season they had that, we used to call them luna. They were the one that goes around on the horse and check where the coffee is out then in turn, relay the message to the office. Then the office will assign where to go and pick up the coffee.

MK: This is the first time that I've heard of a luna for the coffee farms. What else did this luna do?

YT: They used to go around and see whether the land was maintained according to what the lease or contract said and also the communication between the office and the farm was done. When they want fertilizer they would tell the luna to bring the fertilizer. So actually, they were sort of overseer over the whole Captain Cook Coffee Plantation.

MK: How often did the luna come?

YT: We don't know how often but they used to come around with the horse.

MK: During those days, what did you think of the luna?

YT: We didn't think too much about it. Nothing was enforced on us and when something was needed we tell the luna. Maybe we didn't have time to go down to the [Captain Cook] store to shop then we tell the luna to get a bag of rice or whatever we wanted and they would deliver accordingly.

MK: And then you mentioned that the Captain Cook Coffee Mill had a store?

YT: That's right.

MK: What was the name of the store?

YT: Captain Cook Store.

MK: And where was it located?

YT: At the same place where the Dillingham Office is located at present.

MK: What kind of merchandise did that store carry?

YT: It carried general, everything.

MK: So from foods to farming equipment?

YT: That's right.

MK: How were the purchases made from the store?

YT: It was a credit [instead of cash and carry operation] and it [what was owed for purchases] was deducted from the coffee that we shipped out so we usually ended up with credit [YT meant debt] to be paid at the end of the year. So that thing just keeps on piling up so that made us real hard to . . .

MK: So you would charge things at the store?

And it would pile up?

YT: Mm hmm [Yes].

MK: When would you have to pay off for the goods?

YT: So every shipment, the coffee shipment that we did then, from that we were advanced what they called, "picking money." Then everything beyond the picking money was charged against our credit. So during the off season we just charged it and when the coffee started coming in then the picking price [i.e., picking money] was advanced and then beyond that it was applied to the credit.

MK: So was cash ever given out back to you folks?

YT: Well as soon as the debit is paid then we were paid cash for the coffee that we paid out.

MK: Were there any times when you did receive cash?

YT: Several times I know that we got cash.

MK: And say if you needed something that the store didn't have, how would you get something then?

YT: There were some other stores so in the event that we have cash then our parents would go to the store and buy from the stores.

MK: Then I guess what you folks would actually make would depend on coffee prices, yeah?

YT: That's right.

MK: And I was wondering, back then, what sort of things affected the coffee prices?

YT: Gee, that I don't know. As of now, world market was the thing that governed the coffee prices so at that time, too, I think the world market was the thing that governed the coffee prices.

MK: Did your parents know about world market prices?

YT: No, I don't think so.

MK: In your opinion, how well did your family manage with the income?

YT: Just about make a living, I guess.

MK: In those days, were you folks growing anything else other than coffee?

YT: Well, my parents grew all the vegetables that we needed in our family so we didn't buy any vegetables.

MK: What kind of vegetables were your folks growing?

YT: All the vegetables that the Japanese used. Daikon, carrots, cabbage, Chinese cabbage, onions and gobō and lettuce. That's about it, all the food that the Japanese used they tried to grow them.

MK: Was all of the produce just eaten by your family?

YT: Anything extra we used to distribute to our neighbors.

MK: And you mentioned earlier that sometimes when people were having hard time in the upper areas they would try to look for other jobs, did your family ever try to look for other jobs?

YT: Off and on my father used to go out, you know, higher elevation as a woodcutter. They used to work at a mill called "Koa Mill" and they used to work on that big koa log cut into slab and ship it down through sled and just about our farm they had a station there. The truck would arrive until there. They load this slab on this truck and then ship out to Honolulu or wherever the destination was.

MK: So he worked for a lumbering company then?

YT: Not the company but individual operator.

MK: Did he do anything other than that?

- YT: I'm not too familiar in that line but I think my father used to pick all kinds of jobs that were one day or two days. Maybe if there's someone that wants to dig a hole for something for one or two days then he would pick up that kind of job.
- MK: Back then, you were still in school but you were helping your family, what were your feelings about coffee farming at that time?
- YT: At the time that I was growing up it's not like now, you can see all the opportunities and you can see what [is available]. Even at the local you can see the mechanics and carpenters, electrician, all that kind. I don't know how the teenagers now feel but we were not exposed in that kind of opportunities so we didn't have any idea what our future will be and we weren't thinking about our future, it's just day by day. So we weren't thinking what I will be in the future.
- MK: How about your feelings about farming in general?
- YT: In general, I kind of like growing things so I didn't think too much about feeling that I want to get out of farming or that sort.
- MK: Up until 1927 or so or up until eighth grade when you were going to Konawaena, who were your teachers at Konawaena?
- YT: I don't have good memory so, one teacher that I remember is Miss Hoapili, she's still living I was told. She was my grammar school teacher then. Then we had Miss Smith, Mrs. Smith and that's the two teachers that I remember for the grammar school. Then when I entered eighth grade now, Dr. Hayashi, he used to be teacher before being a doctor. And I remember John Ferreira, he used to be a carpenter teacher and Miss Lara and Miss Nolton and then Reinecke.
- MK: John Reinecke?
- YT: Yeah. And they were our teachers and I remember Louis Collins used to be football coach. I used to go to the ag class, I remember that the ag teacher, Brooklyn. Then our principal, I remember was Richmond, Crawford. We used to have this lady, supervising principal, Miss Taylor. When she arrived to the class then we all stood up and said, either, "Good morning, Miss Taylor," or "Good afternoon, Miss Taylor." The teacher used to inform us that she's coming so man, the whole class became real quiet. Other than that, if somebody said that the teacher was so and so then I can really remember but those are some of them that I can mention right now.
- MK: You mentioned football a while ago, how was football back then?
- YT: At that time that Louis Collins was coach, we had one of the strongest teams in this island so I think several years we had the championship team, Konawaena was the championship team and we also had the good players, too. Then after Louis Collins left then, after I left school, football wasn't played in Konawaena for quite some time. I don't know why.

- MK: I heard that for a time didn't have football because the coffee schedule, I was wondering if that was true?
- YT: That maybe true. It's not because of the coffee schedule, I think. But maybe one of the [things that] affected [it] was coffee schedule.
- MK: I know that you were saying that there used to be carpentry class, agriculture class, were these subjects and any other subjects helpful for you in farming later on?
- YT: Well the carpenter class was helpful and the agriculture class was helpful for us.
- MK: What type of things did you learn in that agriculture class?
- YT: Poultry and other subjects were in general, rooting vegetables and grafting.
- MK: Was there any emphasis placed on coffee kind of agriculture?
- YT: No, at that time it wasn't.
- MK: And the other day you were telling me that you learned bookkeeping from Kenji Goto, was that while you were still going to school?
- YT: No, that was after I left school.
- MK: That was a special kind of course?
- YT: Among our friends we had a group, it sort of was like 4-H Club. We were around the 4-H age so we had a group of about six or seven. Everyone of the group was managing the coffee orchard so our county agent emphasized that we should keep a record. For that purpose the county agent asked Kenji Goto to teach us in bookkeeping.
- MK: So that's how you were taught bookkeeping to take the records of your farm?
- YT: Well, that was the start. At that time what we learned was like a credit and debit but we couldn't understand what it was for and so we just passed by and actually we weren't keeping books. Of course we had records that what was the income and what was the, but, that's all we had. We didn't keep in detail. So as far as in bookkeeping, that's the first lesson that we learned. The thing that I learned that time applies me in the future when I start really buckling down to keep the books.
- MK: And I was wondering, why did the county extension agent emphasize bookkeeping so much for you folks?
- YT: Well, we were one of the groups that had members that managed the farm so I think the county agent felt that bookkeeping is essential for us to learn because if the record is not kept we don't know whether we made money or we didn't make money.

MK: So those days the coffee farmer and the mill both had responsibility to keep track of things?

YT: Well, the mill they only have to keep the record of what we owe them and what we ship out and that's the two things that they kept for us. And if the revenue from the coffee doesn't exceed from the things that we bought then end of the year, the statement arrived that we owed Captain Cook an x number of dollars. Then that was carried on to the following year.

MK: In those days was there a limit as to how much you could carry over?

YT: I think there was but I don't remember what it was. So that's when the luna was in action, they would come and say, "Okay, your debit is x number of dollars so you can buy only up to so much or something."

END OF SIDE ONE

SIDE TWO

MK: I think I'm going to change the subject a little bit but going back to the topic of school, I know that later on you took more book-keeping courses and other courses but you did have to stop school at eighth grade.

YT: Yeah.

MK: What were your feelings about school?

YT: Gee, I don't know, we were brought up in that locality that most of the farmers, in fact, all of the farmers were Japanese. After we left school our conversation was in Japanese mostly so actually when I went to school the English was not as fluent as of what we spoke Japanese. The Japanese also, was of the local Japanese which is a mixture of all the prefectures' people so man, we used to copy the Kumamoto-ken's way of speaking. That type of speaking was in general, among our friends and among our associating with the older people. So my English schooling was almost up to zero. When I started working elsewhere I can communicate in Japanese very well to understand the local Japanese people but when I was to talk with some haole people, we couldn't speak at all.

MK: It was hard?

YT: Yeah.

MK: Back in those days, how often would you have to go to talk with a haole person?

YT: Just during the schooling hour with the schoolteachers. So I remember that Miss Nolton was my English teacher and we all spoke Pidgin English so she just came around and corrected the Pidgin English.

We used to draw a tombstone and on the tombstone we write, "Here lies Ivan Go" and pasted it to the wall.

Then when I said "I been go."

Then they said, "There's the tombstone saying that Ivan Go is dead."

So the communication was mostly Japanese. I was very poor in speaking English.

MK: And most of the people around there spoke Japanese?

YT: Right.

MK: But how about Japanese-language school then?

YT: We went Japanese-language school but there again we wasn't studying well so as of today, if they ask me to write in Japanese word, I couldn't write at all. And on the speaking, well lately I'm kind of improving that speaking, through speaking to the elderly Japanese and also to some of the tourist that come in. So kind of brush up but if they ask me to read or write, it's zero (chuckles).

MK: And back in those days, who used to sponsor Japanese school?

YT: Got various churches, I guess. And the community organizes and then like the Napoopoo Japanese School, the Napoopoo Community sort of organized and make that. Then that school that I went was sponsored by the Buddhist church.

MK: And the priest would teach or somebody else? (Telephone rings; interview interrupted, then resumed.)

YT: The priest used to teach them.

MK: We're talking about Japanese-language school and I was wondering about how many years did you go?

YT: Eight years.

MK: You went to Japanese school for eight years and you went to regular school up to eighth grade, right?

YT: That's right.

MK: Why did you stop the regular school at eighth grade?

YT: I was the eldest and financially we weren't able to keep on going to school so I had to work in my farm. So, I wanted to be a mechanic but my parents insisted that I should take care of the farm.

MK: For other families in the area, was that usually the case, too?

YT: Yeah.

MK: And with school and with your helping at home on the farm, was there time for you to play or do something for enjoyment?

YT: No.

MK: No more time for that?

YT: No.

MK: And the other time you mentioned that the Japanese families would get together and they would go look at the coffee flowers, hanami?

YT: Yeah, that was mostly done during the flowering season of the lower elevation. On the high elevation the flower was constantly blooming three or four months so there wasn't a time there was a vast amount of flower that you can see from the house or that sort so the hanami was mostly done in the lower elevation.

MK: And you were telling me that sometimes if you folks have gatherings you would have food like chicken hekka and, when did you folks gather together?

YT: When we apply fertilizer then all the neighbors get together and apply fertilizer. After the job was done then we had that dinner or luncheon, either chicken hekka or something, most of the time was chicken hekka.

MK: And those times, did you have any other type of celebration?

YT: No. The other time we used to get together was that, we had a group of five or six young farmers of our age. It wasn't a 4-H but similar to 4-H that Baron Goto organized. So when we get together, when this group get together we used to have chicken hekka and we enjoy that evening.

MK: And did that group have a certain name that Baron Goto organized?

YT: We may have a name but I don't know what. I don't think so we had. We had a group that all of them were managing the coffee orchard so the group used to get together, work in the garden. After that work we get together and have chicken hekka and enjoy ourselves.

- MK: And the other day you mentioned that your parents were really religious people.
- YT: That's right.
- MK: So did you participate in church activities?
- YT: Yeah. After I left school all the church activities I participated in that.
- MK: What kind of activities did the Hongwanji have back then?
- YT: At that time we had that Chikara No Kai which is equivalent to that present YBA [Young Buddhists Association] and we were real strong on that. Then all the other services that the Hongwanji used to have we used to attend that service.
- MK: And the Chikara No Kai, what did they do?
- YT: Every month we used to meet and discuss a little bit of our religion. Other than that we used to get together and have some kind of entertainment. And once a year or so the other church's group come excursion to Kona then that's when we had all kinds of entertainment, singing in groups.
- MK: And you were telling me that your father went back to Japan in 1926 and he became a lay minister, yeah?
- YT: Yeah.
- MK: And when he came back to Kona was he active as a lay minister?
- YT: He was in that line when the reverend that was assigned to Kona Hongwanji was real busy or sick; then the reverend asked my father to do the service for them.
- MK: In those days, what kind of services were being given?
- YT: Well, just that my father's service was to perform the [memorial] service of the seventh day anniversary or 70 year anniversary or whatever. He wasn't able to give any sermon because he was a very poor speaker.
- MK: But he did the other services?
- YT: Yeah.
- MK: And another thing that you mentioned to me the other day was that you didn't have real relatives here in Kona.
- YT: That's right, nobody.

MK: So, instead of relatives what did you have then?

YT: Well we didn't have anything like that so the real close associates of our parents were the ones that we, we didn't consider them a relative but their children used to call [my father] uncle and we used to call their father, uncle, too. But lately everyone that they used to call us uncle they have their own uncle right now.

MK: So nowadays you don't have that anymore.

YK: No.

MK: What did you think about that, having all these aunties and uncles?

YT: Nothing in significant but that made us feel real close to them.

MK: And nowadays . . .

YT: Well, now we have all the in-laws and uncles and aunties so we cannot stretch ourselves that far to associate, well we associate with them but not as close as we used to.

MK: And then when you graduated eighth grade, you started managing the farm, yeah?

YT: That's right.

MK: And why did you have to manage the farm, your father was still . . .

YT: Yes, my father was still working but he occasionally went out when the reverend called him. So many times he wasn't at home so mother and I had to get the main job. So after I took over, my father wasn't too active in the farm.

MK: And what was involved in your managing the farm?

YT: All that work that should be done on the farm, I was doing that. Also hiring and paying these people what they have worked for me, I have to pay them.

MK: And you had to deal with the [Captain Cook coffee] mill, too?

YT: The mill wasn't too much of a job because it was all contracted out. We just ship out and what they pay is what we got. So it didn't involve too much of that.

MK: And I think the prices of coffee were good up to about 1928, and 1929 the prices went down. I was wondering, how did this affect you and the farm?

YT: All that years, the price of the coffee was good for a short period and it just tapered off so most of the farmers just barely made their living but some of those good luck farmers well, they hit the price when the price was good and that's when they have that nest

made. But other than that the majority of the farmers were in such that they just made a go.

MK: And that was the same for you, too?

YT: Yeah.

MK: Then 1931, the family moved to this location, yeah?

YT: That's right.

MK: This present location. Why did you folks move?

YT: We were [leasing coffee land] on a contract with Captain Cook Mill so we used to ship out all cherry coffee [to the mill] so the price of the cherry coffee was sort of controlled by the coffee company. Whereas if you make into parchment you can sell the parchment whenever you think the price is right. But if cherry then, well when the cherry is picked you have to ship it out, regardless of the price. So, that's one reason it made me move. Another reason was that if you process the cherry coffee to parchment then the labor involved in processing is retained in the family, whereas if you sell cherry then that labor is charged against us by the mill. So it's out of the family. If you process your own then that's the area that you can have a little bit more revenue than the cherry coffee farmers so that made us move.

MK: To move and to decide to process your own coffee, you have to get your drying platform, you had to get grinder, pulping machine, all of that, how did you manage to get all of that?

YT: Well, the person who sold us this orchard wanted to retire. They were looking for a farmer who they can trust and then get the value out of the farms so they, this family asked us if we can take care of it. So the equipment was all, it was all there so we don't have to invest for the parts. All that was equipped, we bought all the equipment and all, the whole nine acres leasehold, everything for \$800.

MK: That leasehold for \$800. Was that a fair price for that time?

YT: I think it was.

MK: And at that time, was there already coffee growing?

YT: Yeah.

MK: And this leasehold was through the lease from Greenwell?

YT: Mm hmm [Yes].

MK: And from that time on you didn't have to send coffee down to Captain Cook Mill?

YT: That's right.

MK: And you could sell it to anyone else?

YT: Mm hmm [Yes].

MK: So that time who did you sell your coffee to in 1931, 1932?

YT: At that time there were several mills so whoever came and offered the best price, that's where I sold it.

MK: Can you recall some of the names of the different mills that used to be around?

YT: Gee, I sold to a person called Young, then I sold some to Noguchi, Matsuoka and Tanouye and that's the person that I sold to but there were still other mills like Holualoa, Nakamoto. Then, of course there's Captain Cook and American Factors but American Factors and Captain Cook, they were somehow lower than the other mills.

MK: And you would choose which mill to send it to just on the basis of the price they would bring?

YT: That's right.

MK: Could you negotiate with the millers?

YT: Yeah.

MK: Was it more of a seller's market or buyer's market, that time?

YT: At that time I think it was buyer's market. So if the buyer think he can offer x number of cents per pound and then make money then they used to.

MK: So those days you would go to the millers and check what kind of prices there were offering?

YT: Most times the millers would come to the seller and then offer the price.

MK: And you say from the time you moved over here, 1931 up to 1941, right before the war started, how was it for the family over here?

YT: Economically we were just making a living.

MK: I remember you were telling me that during that time, maybe about 1936, you were growing coffee and tomatoes.

YT: Yeah.

MK: Why did you diversify into tomatoes?

YT: See, during the off season we didn't have too much jobs so some of the tomato growers they said they make x number of dollars, so that kind of make me go into it. And sort of keep me busy during the off season.

MK: And, these tomatoes that you grew, where did you sell them to?

YT: To Honolulu.

MK: You had a contract or something with a wholesaler?

YT: No, we didn't have any contract but we used to have wholesalers. The wholesalers look forward to get more produce that they can sell so that the more produce they handle, the more they make money. So they, well, as far as meeting them we didn't meet them. We just wrote a letter that we have tomatoes and we would like to ship out and no price was negotiated at the time. It's sort of, what do you call, they won't buy outright. The kind of dealing that they have is, what you call, after they sell they pay you.

MK: They pay you a percentage, maybe, of the profits?

YT: Yeah. Consignment.

MK: So how did the tomato business go for you?

YT: It was a failure (chuckles). I wouldn't say total failure but the amount of labor I put in wasn't justified.

MK: At about the same time you were telling me that you folks tried to get a co-op started?

YT: Yeah.

MK: What happened?

YT: On that vegetable side, the co-op was pretty good but anytime when the vegetable growers want to make into a co-operative, the wholesalers jack up the price. So that organizing the co-op wasn't successful because if we go to the co-operative then we cannot sell at what the wholesaler is paying to the individual. So the members said it's easier to sell it through the co-operative than go direct, so that way it's sort of that the co-operative will get bogged down. So the vegetable co-operative didn't really succeed but we still have that co-operative for our farmers. It's a co-operative but if all that farmers, local farmers get together and then sell through one co-operative, I think it would be to an advantage. But still then, if the group gets together then the other wholesalers will jack up their prices [tempting co-op members to sell outside the co-op], it would go out of the co-operative so the co-operative won't function as it should be.

MK: Back in those days, 1930s up until the wartime, were there any other large organizations of farmers like kumi or jigyōdan in your area that you were aware of?

YT: We had that farmer's association but it was just an association, they didn't handle any of the commodities.

MK: So a group of farmers would meet and what would they do?

YT: This association, mostly of the coffee farmers were organized to talk about the coffee vacation and all that. Concerning the coffee mostly.

MK: Then, I guess, by that time, 1930s, you had the coffee vacation, coffee schedule?

YT: Yeah.

MK: Did you employ children, too, on the farm?

YT: Yeah, quite a number of them.

MK: Without the children, could you have still picked the coffee at a reasonable rate and still make profit?

YT: That time, well, we had pretty good employees, the Filipino family and some Hawaiian families but on the coffee vacation, mainly the object was to keep the families' children in the farm. Not as of employing the children. So the families' children did a lot of work. In fact they did better than the adults did.

MK: Why was that?

YT: Gee, I wouldn't say better but if you have a teenager then they will start working at the time that their parents start working and they would end up at the time that the parents end up. So in other words, if you work 12 hours then the teenager will work 12 hours, whereas a hired hand will only work eight hours. So the eight hours that the teenager is working will not be equivalent to the hired hand but the extra hours that they put in will greatly help the parents in their work so in that line the school children really did a banging job.

MK: And by the time World War II came, you were still farming coffee. I was wondering, how did World War II affect your farm?

YT: Not too much except that we have restriction on the gas and then we weren't allowed to move around too freely to any outside district. So other than that, of course, our price was controlled by OPA [Office of Price Administration] and so financially, we didn't make money but we didn't lose money either.

MK: So you first started planting macadamia nuts in 1945, yeah?

YT: Yeah.

MK: After the war, I think what I'll do is just end the interview here and then come back another time and then just continue with the story of your farming in macadamia nuts from 1945 to the present.

YT: Okay.

MK: Thank you for today.

END OF INTERVIEW

Tape Nos. 9-55-2-81 and 9-56-2-81

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

with

Yoshitaka Takashiba (YT)

January 26, 1981

Captain Cook, Hawaii

BY: Michiko Kodama (MK)

MK: Mr. Takashiba, we're going to start again with the time you started macadamia nut growing, yeah?

YT: Mm hmm [Yes].

MK: In 1945 you planted the seedlings and 1947 you grafted and in 1948 you planted them in fields.

YT: Mm hmm [Yes].

MK: And I was wondering, you already had coffee, so why did you decide to diversify into macadamia nuts.

YT: Well, one thing was that this orchard was planted with silver oak tree for shading the coffee. This was recommended by Baron Goto after he visited Java and came back. He recommended to the farmers to plant some kind of shade tree and that shade will sort of have a better quality [coffee] produced under the shade. He had told his uncle to plant a shade tree and his uncle, Mr. Goto, had planted this whole orchard, coffee orchard, with silver oak tree. When I took over the silver oak tree was already very tall and some of the trees were, the diameter was about two feet in diameter.

And at the time, I noticed that one particular farm they had one macadamia nut tree right close by their living quarters. They were about 20 feet high, of course, they had the lower branches all cut off because it was shading the drying platform for the coffee. But I thought if we can have some productive tree as a shade tree then I can have a shade tree and some income from the shade tree, whereas the silver oak tree, there was no production at all, just to give shade. So that kind of gave me some idea of planting the macadamia nut.

And at the same time, while I was thinking in such, my friend coached me that in the future, macadamia nuts might be one of the important product in Kona. So with that two things, sort of

encourage me to plant the macadamia nuts. At that time the university, the university experiment station was doing some research on macadamia nuts and they were collecting various variety that were grown in Kona and elsewhere in the state of Hawaii.

MK: And so did you have any contact with the experimental station when you first began?

YT: The contact was through my friend, Yosoto Egami. He was working at the University of Hawaii Experiment Station and they were doing a lot of experimental grafting and he's the one that encouraged me to plant the macadamia nuts. Try that, anyway, so for that reason I started to plant the seedlings. Three years later, after I planted I grafted and planted in the orchard.

MK: When you first started diversifying into macadamia nuts, did you have some knowledge and background in macadamia nut growing before you started?

YT: None at all.

MK: You mentioned that when you were involved with, like a 4-H group, a group went out and looked for seedlings, a long time ago with Baron Goto?

YT: Yeah, that time, that was not too long before I started to plant macadamia nuts. At that time, the university was going out to find out the potential of the macadamia nut but very little was known at that time.

MK: What was involved in the growing and the maintenance of your macadamia nuts from the time they were seedlings to the final processing?

YT: I was told that the macadamia nuts would not germinate too fast so I had a patch of tomatoes growing and under the tomatoes I started the seedling of macadamia nuts. In other words, I planted the tomatoes and macadamia nut seed at the same time. While the tomatoes were growing, the macadamia nuts were ready to germinate and then it germinated about four months after I planted the seed. So by the time the tomatoes were out of production the macadamia nut plant was just ready to sprout or some were couple inches grown up. But that's how I started out and as far as maintenance, there wasn't too much maintenance. I had to plant it in the ground so the weeding was the main job that I had to do during the growing stage. Then when the macadamia nut plant was the size to be grafted my friend, Egami, came over to graft them. He had quite a bit of experience already in grafting and choosing variety. But at the time that he came over to graft the University of Hawaii didn't have any specific variety chosen yet at that time. They were experimenting with about 15 varieties so out of the 15, nobody knew which variety would be chosen as a promising variety. So Egami came around with some sign that this may be one of the variety that would be chosen. So at the time that I grafted my macadamia nut

there weren't any name chosen for that variety. They had numbers on each variety but the university hadn't chosen a variety that they would recommend the farmers to graft.

MK: What kind of things did they consider back then, to choose which variety?

YT: I actually don't know what kind of thing that they have considered in choosing but probably the first thing, I think, the size of the macadamia nut, the uniformity of the macadamia nut. Then the oil content in the macadamia nut. Then how well the nut will drop off from the macadamia nut [tree].

But at the time that they were choosing the variety, they didn't know how the variety will react ten years from the productive year, twenty years from the productive year. Those are the things that gradually they start learning and they have eliminated some varieties because of the habit of the certain varieties that they had chosen wasn't to the extent that it can be recommended to the farmers.

MK: Up until 1969, when you became a Kona Macadamia Co-op Supervisor, I was wondering, who did all the work at the farm?

YT: I did and my family did.

MK: So that would mean your wife and your children?

YT: That's right.

MK: And how did they help you on the farm?

YT: While they were growing up, my coffee orchard was very productive orchard. Mr. Goto, whom I acquired the land from had the tree, coffee tree, real high. The whole orchard was sort of shaded and had that silver oak tree, too, so the shade was more than what the other orchard was. And I had planted the macadamia nut under the shade so for good many years, I don't know how long it was but the tree, the macadamia nut tree itself didn't grow too well under the shade. So it took very long time before any macadamia nut were producing because of that shade. Then as the years went by, the coffee price came down and that's when I start trimming the coffee tree. When I trimmed the coffee tree heavily, then the macadamia nut started producing. While the children were growing, as far as maintaining the macadamia nut, practically, we didn't do anything, we just planted and left it alone.

MK: Then those days, about how many years did it take before a macadamia nut tree was producing?

YT: I think the productability at that time, if any farmers had planted the tree as what they are doing right now, I think the production is identical to what the productability is right now. I don't know about the other farmers, but my nuts that I have planted actually

took me about, over 12 years before I had any production. And even I had the production, coffee was my main product and then the macadamia nut, I didn't have any intention of selling. And then there weren't any strong market at that time so I didn't care much about the macadamia nuts. I just planted that for the shade tree and since the planting was under the coffee tree, it didn't grow so we just left it as is.

MK: You just mentioned that there wasn't too much of a market for macadamia nuts back then, where were you selling your macadamia nuts then?

YT: Well, at the very start I didn't sell anything and we let the rats have a feast out of that. But there were some candymakers in Hilo and the first market that I acquired was in Kohala through Sugai who was also working at the experimental station and this person, Waterhouse. I think was Waterhouse, he was making either roasted macadamia nut or candy, I guess. Then he was the one that I used to sell my macadamia nuts to, through one of the Sugai brothers.

MK: And I was wondering, you know, if the production didn't come for 12 years and you were depending on your coffee, how did you finance your macadamia nut production in the early years?

YT: I didn't do any financing on the macadamia nuts because I didn't do anything. I didn't do fertilizing. I didn't do anything except plant it in the coffee field, so actually there were no money involved in cultivating.

MK: No initial outlay of funds?

YT: Yeah, so actually I grew my macadamia nuts at the very start without any financing.

MK: And I was wondering how did this growing of macadamia nuts affect your coffee plantings?

YT: It didn't affect anything because it didn't grow too much under the shade. In fact, it did some damage to the coffee pickers because the thorn on the leaves used to scratch the back and all that. The pickers used to grumble at me, why don't I cut all that macadamia nuts. I just kept quiet and left it alone. I didn't expect that in the future I would make money or anything (chuckles). I just had it planted evenly spaced. So actually I got my macadamia nuts started without involving any financial expenses.

MK: In those days, what did the other farmers think when you started planting macadamia nuts?

YT: They didn't think too much of it. Some of them said, "Oh, you damn fool (chuckles)."

MK: In those days, the coffee prices were pretty good after the war?

YT: Well, the coffee price is a real gambling thing in that if Brazil had a frost then it really went up, then if Brazil started producing a lot of coffee then the price went way down. So most of the farmers were waiting for Brazil to get a frost but the price really fluctuated so much that we had very lesser chance in making money. Some of the farmers hit the right time, they make good money. But other than that most of the farmers just making, break even, to just make a go, year by year.

MK: And I was wondering about, you were saying that some farmers said, "Oh, you're a damn fool," to plant macadamia nuts. Were there other farmers who were growing macadamia nuts back in the forties, too?

YT: Very few that had planted at that time.

MK: I noticed that there's a big mac nut farm down Honaunau side, Mr. Matsuda's farm. Did he start that early?

YT: No, he started, I don't know what year that was but he started pretty late. After I planted my macadamia nut and the university felt that macadamia nuts would be one of the industries for Kona they [university] were propagating a lot of grafted macadamia nuts. And at the start they were selling for \$1.50 per plant which was about three to four years old. Some of them bought and planted at that time but at that time that the university was selling the seedlings, I had already planted in my orchard so I didn't go and buy them.

But at the time that they had this macadamia nut grafted and ready to be planted in the orchard, some of them were sold but some were start getting overgrown so they used to give the farmers free. And that's when quite a number of the farmers planted the macadamia nut because they were getting the plant free.

But some of them planted macadamia nut free and as the trees started producing, they weren't too strong market so they cut all the trees. So when I visit those farmers, they said, "Gee, Takashiba, if I had that macadamia nuts I think I would be in the same category with you but damn fool me, I cut the tree." (Chuckles) I think there were a couple of farmers that had cut the trees.

MK: So, let's see, at that time not many then, were in macadamia nuts?

YT: There were some farmers then that were sort of curious and then like Baron Goto and at that time was Pahau, he was the supervisor at the experiment station. And that University of Hawaii sort of encouraged the local farmers to plant the macadamia nuts so some of them believed in that and they had planted the macadamia nuts at that time. And those who had planted the macadamia nuts at that time have the variety that I have grafted in my orchard.

Of course, I have some other variety that those people don't have which was not chosen as the variety that the university recommend. The really oldtimers who had secured the free plant or bought the plant from the university experiment station have that variety that, at present, is not suitable for propagating more. They found out that certain varieties didn't stand good as what they expected so they have eliminated that variety. Such variety like Pahau, Nuuanu and Kohala, those are the three varieties.

Well besides these three varieties they had Kakea and Keauhou, so at present they have Kakea and Keauhou. Nuuanu, Kohala and Pahau, at the very start these three varieties was the most promising varieties, better than Keauhou or Keaau. But lately they have found that it doesn't fall off the tree well, the shell was too thin that they get more attacked by the rat. There are other undesirable characteristic on these three varieties so right now three varieties are eliminated.

So Keaau Orchard, when they first started off, they planted five varieties. But as the trees started producing and the experiment station found out that these three varieties wasn't too promising, Keaau Orchard went to the orchard and they cut all these three varieties and grafted with the Keauhou and Kakea.

MK: So if the maturity time for the macadamia nut tree is so long, say 10, 12 years, you can't tell for a long time whether you have a good tree or not then, if they were still experimenting back then?

YT: Right now they have, we know that Keauhou is good, we know that Kakea is good and there's several varieties that in the later years they found out. But as you say, we don't know whether the new variety that we are propagating right now will be a good productive tree in 30, 40 years from now. So those are the things that we don't know until that years come.

MK: So you're really taking a risk sometimes?

YT: Well, that's the gamble that the farmers have to take and find out. So I had it planted at that time when the university was doing the research work. Because I had planted,[then], of course, I had a lot of undesirable varieties in my orchard but they are marketable so I'm way ahead of the game.

MK: Now, the same time that you were diversifying, you became a mechanic for about seven years, from 1945 to 1952?

YT: Yeah.

MK: Why did you become a mechanic?

YT: At that time, I used to make just enough money to support my whole family. I thought that if I can go out and work and then I, myself can support my family. Then all the other members of my family don't have to work as hard as what we've been doing. And the price

of the coffee was getting lower so I thought if I can find a trade that will give me a substantial income to support my family by myself then other members of my family can be in some other ordinance of job then I would be ahead of the game. So that's why I left the farm and went into mechanic.

MK: And where were you working?

YT: At Aoki Garage.

MK: And when you did that what happened to the farm itself?

YT: I rented the farm to one of the Filipino families for three years and when the three years expired I offered him to buy my orchard. At the time I offered for \$3,000 then the buyer said if I sell for \$2,500 then he would buy and that was not agreeable. I terminated the lease and started farming my own.

MK: And your working outside of the farm, was that kind of unusual or something common for farmers to be doing that time in Kona?

YT: Not too many people were doing that at that time. But I already started learning mechanic so I ran the farm and the same time worked at Aoki Garage.

MK: So what was your schedule like if you had to work at the garage and work at the farm too?

YT: The family took care of the farm and in the afternoon I'd come home and grind the coffee.

MK: And those days at the garage I was wondering what kinds of cars did you work on?

YT: Gee, those days, right after the war so the cars that were manufactured before the war. The parts wasn't available so easily so many things we had to supplement or we let the car run anyway somehow to run the car anyway. So many things we made our own parts.

MK: I was wondering, some people told me it was after the war that a lot of jeeps came in, up until that time it was mostly donkey and they used other things, I was wondering, did you notice that change in the garage?

YT: Yeah, mm hmm.

MK: If you try to remember, about how many families had jeeps back then?

YT: I don't know how many families owned a jeep but right after the war the jeeps were available through the surplus. It was so convenient that practically you can go with the jeep, even the road is not well levelled off so there were quite a number of jeeps in Kona at that time.

MK: And how were the roads back then? I've heard stories about the roads.

YT: Well, the roads, the coffee was the main production so most of the local farmers were Japanese and like I'm nisei, I was brought up in such that my family came from Fukui-ken and they were farming and they were real conservative. Every inch of the farm was put in production so I was trained in such that every inch of the soil is valuable and most of the farmers, the nisei farmers were taught in such that they were reluctant in cutting any coffee trees. So even how narrow it is, even the two coffee trees touched the jeep or whatever the vehicle is, they are forced to go through that line without cutting the coffee trees.

Some of the, well, I would say a good farmer or a bold farmer said instead of damaging the jeep you might as well get rid of the coffee trees so they cut down the coffee trees and had the road widened.

But I myself didn't do that. We had, the road was just about seven feet wide and the jeep would just barely make that place. We had a few stones laid out and I suppose we were pretty good drivers and, you know, we drove these (chuckles). So most of the farmers were like that, they just laid down a few stones and then passed through between the aisles of the coffee. It was four wheel drive so that was able to be done at that time.

MK: And when you were working in that garage, what did you think about being a mechanic, your feelings toward the job?

YT: From the very young stage I wanted to be a mechanic so I enjoyed doing that and I enjoyed repairing the vehicles to the owner's expectations. When they really find that their jeep or whatever I fixed moved, they were real happy about that and my enjoyment was to see them go out of the garage happily.

MK: And I guess you were saying in terms of the money, it helped too?

YT: Well, those days, the money, it was only about \$45 a month and I was increased to \$60 a month just before I left, that's correct. And with that \$60 somehow we managed our family's daily and in general I used to support the family with \$60.

MK: Different from nowadays, yeah? And then by around 1955 you were back farming and you were involved in something called the Kona Macadamia Nut Club and I was wondering, when was this club first started?

YT: Gee, I have no idea when it was first started but I think if you see Jack Tokunaga, he was the organizer so he would know the very start of the club. So I think it was an area when the university was sort of pushing macadamia nuts to the farmers. They were exploring what kind of variety would be suitable for Kona. So just about when the university was exploring that macadamia industry. I don't know what year it was.

MK: What was the purpose of the club?

YT: To study [macadamia] culture and how to propagate them.

MK: And what did the club actually do then to fulfill the purpose?

YT: I think at that time we tried to arrange to get some information from the university so we went to visit the University Experiment Station, what they doing and ask them questions. So that's the sort of thing we were involved in that time.

MK: Is it still going on, this club?

YT: No. That became the Kona Macadamia Nut Cooperative.

MK: And in the beginning, before it became the cooperative, what was the membership, about how many people were in there?

YT: I don't remember who they were but this Kona Macadamia Nut Club, it was a very short period, not too long. I think probably Jack has some written material of the Kona Macadamia Nut Club.

MK: And I was going to ask you next about the time when you almost declared bankruptcy, you were telling me the story the other day about 1958, you almost had to declare bankruptcy and I was wondering what had happened, you know, to make that happen?

YT: Well, before Brazil had the frost and then the coffee price came way up and that's when all of the Kona people were going wild to extend the farm. Every Dick and Harry acquired land or they went down Miloli'i and then expanded. I went down Keei side and start expanding 24 acres, I went to the bank and asked for finance. They reluctantly said, "How much you need?"

Then I was kind of holding back the amount of money I want to borrow and I mentioned \$10,000.

They said, "That's all?"

So, we were getting bold of acquiring more money so the financing was easily acquired at that time because the coffee price was good. And within three years time that thing came way down. So before we can pay the obligation, the price came down. That kind of makes me feel strongly that I want to bankrupt because I wasn't able to meet the obligation with the coffee.

END OF SIDE ONE

SIDE TWO

MK: So you were saying that you had tried to expand but market prices went down and you felt you couldn't meet the financial obligations and you were about to declare bankruptcy?

YT: Yeah.

MK: And then what happened when you were about to do that?

YT: Then that's when, because of the situation, at that time, I don't know if was state or, anyway, the legislature declared that Kona is a disaster area. They appropriate some money for Kona disaster area and they had loans available for the farmers with very low interest, at that time was 3 percent interest.

So Herbert Hiroshige, our extension agent at that time, really worked hard to get this loan available. But we were trained in such that if we were to get the government support it's kind of a shame to the family. That was the Japan style, I think, so very few people did apply for the loan. In fact nobody at the start. So our county agent Mr. Hiroshige pound the table and he got real mad with us, he said, "God darn it, I work hard to get the loan and you guys don't apply." So with his coaching a lot of the farmers applied for the loan and I was one of them.

Before I applied for that loan I went to one of my financiers and mentioned about bankruptcy. He told me if I was going to bankrupt I better bankrupt right away because he said the more longer you extend that the more trouble you get into. So I made my mind to file in bankruptcy. So I went to the bank and mentioned about it and then he mentioned that there is an emergency loan, which I knew about it.

He said if I qualify for that they're willing to support me. Then at the time I checked the procedure in the loan. Then they told me that if you make a direct loan from the government then it's going to take very long time to process it but if the bank participates then the loan will be processed real fast. So I went to the bank and then asked them if I could participate with the bank. But anyway to acquire that loan the bank must turn down my loan and then you go to the government and get the loan. But if the bank don't turn down the loan then we cannot get the government loan. But the bank can participate 25 percent of the total loan that every farm needs, then the state will put out the 75 percent of that. So I went to see the manager and then applied for the loan.

At that time the first question they asked me was, what was my production of the coffee and with the production of the coffee that I had, at that time I had 36 acres of coffee, all in coffee. So from that we got all that, I took my book and then got the production and all that thing and after that manager figured out, he said, "Takashiba, you have no way of paying that loan, with the coffee prices." So in turn he asked me, "What else you have?"

So I mentioned I had avocados, macadamia nuts and I grew some tomatoes and I grew some taro at the time so I mentioned all this. But the macadamia nut wasn't in full production yet. The other things, the avocado was producing but not a substantial amount. The tomato was a gambling thing that it will not help me

financially. But the macadamia nuts, at that time, were already something to think about and the university had very good figures.

The manager asked me how many trees I had, so at that time I didn't know how many trees but I had planted this orchard full and then also that Keei orchard I had planted almost all the 24 acres. So I didn't know exactly how many trees I had but I mentioned that I had the whole acreage planted with macadamia nuts. Then the manager said, "Oh, this is promising, so if you can count how many trees you got then let's figure our income from the macadamia nuts."

So I went back to my farm and counted all my macadamia nut trees, how many trees were how many years old and how many trees were what age and right down the line and took the information to the bank. Then the bank in turn got the information from the university of what the productability per tree and what the price of macadamia nuts were at that time. So we got all the information together.

When the manager got the figures out, boy, the figure was so rosy that he said, "Okay, this is promising, we'll go ahead with the loan."

So I was at the time already scared so I told them, "Okay, the university is giving that kind of figures, let's cut down to 75% of what the university is figuring because not every tree will be producing as of what the university is figuring.

So he said, "Okay, that's a good idea." So he did that and still then, within ten year period I was able to pay all my obligations with the macadamia nuts.

I was still not satisfied with that figure so I said, "Okay, let's cut down to 50% of the university's figure and if at 50%, if I can meet that obligation then I'll go through with the loan, otherwise I won't. Because even at 50%, how we know it will come to that point or not, but at 50% I'm willing to take the gamble." So he refigured at 50% and still then within ten years' time I was able to pay the obligation so for that reason I didn't file in my bankruptcy.

And they started processing that loan and I was under that farm loan for, gee, I don't know how many years, 15 years or so, I think. But in the later part I was able to pay the loan. I was able to pay the loan earlier but the farm loan officer said, "You might get into trouble so leave a certain amount and pay a little bit so that in case you get into trouble you can always refinance your loan." If I pay them all then I have to start from scratch to get into the government loan and it's real hard to do. But at the time I paid them off I was darn sure I don't have to go back to the farm loan so I paid them off.

I said, "Okay, unless I borrow the money each year for my operation I cannot be continuing it." I wanted to terminate the loan so that the other person can come into the loan that who were badly needed.

I mentioned it and then said I want to terminate to give the other guys a chance. So, what I am today is because the government helped me. The experiment station and the extension agent really gave me the morale to go around with.

MK: Was that about the time that you expanded your macadamia nut trees more and more?

YT: Yeah, at that time I had it all planted already so, of course, it was nothing producing but I had it all planted so with that macadamia nut and the help of the university and the government I'm what [I am] today.

MK: I was wondering, what did the other farmers think about what you were going through and doing?

YT: Well, since Hiroshige have really pushed the farmers, a lot of farmers, the same time that I applied for the loan, they applied for the loan. So all the farmers at that time applied for the loan, they are making good right now.

MK: And after a couple, about four or five years, in 1961, you were the supervisor/manager for the Kona Macadamia Nut Co-op, yeah?

YT: Yeah.

MK: I was wondering, when did this Kona Macadamia Nut Co-op start?

YT: I forgot what year it was, I think around 1961, I think.

MK: And I was wondering how was it formed, you had said that it originally sort of took over Kona Macadamia Nut Club?

YT: Well, it's not that it took over but most of the members of the club joined us. We thought it was the right time to start off. And Herbert Hiroshige, he was the extension agent at that time. John Iwane, too, was but Herbert Hiroshige was on the economic side so he had the broad, what do you call, knowledge on cooperative side. He kind of encouraged us to organize the cooperative.

MK: And I was wondering, what were the duties of this cooperative?

YT: The duty was to get the farmer's macadamia nut together and sell to the buyers as a cooperative.

MK: And back in 1961, what was the membership?

YT: Oh, I actually don't know how many members there were. It's going to take some time for me to count, probably about 20 or so, I think.

MK: Twenty or so? And I was wondering, how did you get your job as supervisor/manager with the co-op?

YT: From the very young stage I was real interested in cooperative, I know once I went to a gathering where at that time Japan was real active in cooperatives. We had this person from Japan, Kagawa Toyohiko, uh, he came to Kona and talked about the cooperative and that was in, I forgot how old I was but I think I was still in teenage yet. And that interested me and then, so, I was from the very kid days, I was interested in getting the farmers together and marketing together. For that reason I was real active in this cooperative so I did a lot of sacrificing job. I had a truck, I went out to collect the nuts with my own expense and then market it together to whoever bought the nut from us. That's how I was involved in that supervisor/manager at the same time.

MK: And back then, was the job just getting the members together, getting the macadamia nuts and marketing it? Or did it involve some kind of grading or weighing and processing?

YT: No, the buyer did all that so at the very start was that. At the very start all the farmers was supposed to leave the nuts at one place, it was Jack Tokunaga's shop, he had that carpenter shop. At that time was Ideal Builders, the name of that company was Ideal Builders. We used to collect the nuts, the farmers were supposed to bring all the nuts over there and then at the given date we contacted the, at the time the buyer was Honokaa Macadamia Nut.

We contacted Honokaa and they brought the truck and loaded up. So at the very start all that, the president, the officers were working free so when the collection date was set, the nuts was collected at one place then all the counting and bookkeeping was done free. And this thing existed about couple months, I think. Then we were ready to make that, build that husking plant. Before we built that husking plant, some of the farmers wasn't able to husk so we used to do the husking at my home.

MK: Did you have the machinery to husk the nuts?

YT: We used to jack up the jeep rearend and run the jeep, one side wheel was on the floor and the other side jacked up and so that made it turn. We put the nut underneath the wheel and that's how we used to husk it. I used to husk my nuts and also a few of my friends' nuts and then market it. Then later on we made, I made a husking device out of a car rearend run on a motor and we had that running for a while. So I used to do some husking at my home and then shipped out through the cooperative.

MK: And you were saying later on the cooperative got its own husking machine?

YT: Yeah.

MK: How did it finance buying the husking plant?

YT: We went to the farm loan and then through that we got that husking plant.

- MK: And those days, if the people didn't sell to Honokaa, where else could they have sold their nuts to?
- YT: There's some sold to Kohala and some was sold to Hilo processors, there's one man who was producing candies, macadamia nut candy, chocolate candy. They were the ones that were buying that. Then later year, Honokaa and Keaau were buying nuts so we used to sell to two markets, Keaau and Honokaa.
- MK: And I was wondering how did the farmers react to this cooperative?
- YT: Well, it was the only area that we can market any amount of quantity so we were able to sell the nuts real easily without problems.
- MK: And you were also saying that in the beginning you folks weren't paid for your work. Later on, were you paid for your cooperative work as supervisor/manager?
- YT: Yeah, as soon as the husking plant was made then we were paid by hours. My wife and I manned the place and she got paid by hour and I got paid by hour and I did go out and collect the nuts. The husking plant was right below my orchard so it was real good access anytime. So when I come home with that load and that's when we started husking. We just put in our time and we were paid by the amount of hours that we worked in that.
- MK: And since both you and your wife were working at the co-op, how did this farm do, then?
- YT: Well, it wasn't a full-time job so it wasn't too much of a hardship running the farm. And also, at that time I had a few employees working in my farm. So if we weren't able to husk the nuts right away I used to hire my farm hand to work in the plant.
- MK: And those days, how many farm hands did you have?
- YT: I had about three, I think.
- MK: Part-time?
- YT: No, most, all of the three were full-time, I tried to shift them in that macadamia nut husking plant and then also I used to go out and work for some other farm. So when my farm was lack of job then I used to solicit them spraying or other farm job some other farmers need.
- MK: I was wondering about your own work, you said nowadays it's hard to find farm hands, yeah?
- YT: Mm hmm.
- MK: How about those days, was it easy or hard to find them?

YT: Those days it wasn't too bad, in fact, it was, they used to come and ask for the job.

MK: And those days how much were you paying farm hands?

YT: Once in a while I go to the parties and they meet me and they say, "Hey, Mr. Takashiba, you forget me?" And they said, "Ho, you know, I used to work over at that mill and you only paid \$5 a day." So that was the..

MK: So that was the going rate in those days?

YT: Yeah, so I said to them, "Gee, you were lucky that I gave you job at that time, not too many people were able to work at that time." (Chuckles) So at that time we were paying \$5 a day.

MK: That one didn't include any housing..

YT: No, no.

MK: They worked all year around, your farm hands?

YT: Yeah.

MK: That was kind of unusual, yeah? To have year around farm hands?

YT: Well, at my farm I cannot be using all them right around but I had 24 acres on the Keei land and this one's 90 and I also leased another 15 acres of macadamia nuts and coffee. That sort of kept the whole employees pretty busy. And on top of that we used to run that husking mill and besides that if some other farmers needed hand then we helped. So, I had them pretty well busy, all year 'round.

MK: And while you were still at Kona Macadamia Nut Coop, you told me that at about 1968 Sunset got involved with the Kona Macadamia Nut Coop, can you explain how Sunset got involved?

YT: Well, Sunset had its members, coffee producers, and also the coffee producers had some macadamia nuts. And, so, they had expanded into macadamia nuts. At that time with our production in our co-op, our advisor, Herbert Hiroshige said that unless we have a production of half a million pounds we must not get into cracking because we cannot justify the expense with the amount. Knowing that we were not exploring the area of getting into cracking the nuts, the Sunset members felt that they should get into the cracking. So without our knowing they went into cracking the nut. And their volume was much, much smaller than our volume so they have persuade us, Kona Macadamia Nut Cooperative to join them.

But our members felt that, gee, with the past experience with the cooperative, we had Donkey Cooperative, Pacific Cooperative, then we had the Sunset Coffee Cooperative. Because we have three cooperatives, coffee cooperatives, they weren't functioning too

well. We knew that too many cooperatives was not justified in Kona. Sunset members also mentioned about that strongly when they were organizing the cooperative. With that strong, what do you call, feeling that they have if we had more cooperatives would not do too well and even of that, without asking the Kona Macadamia Nut Cooperative, they went into that some of our members were kind of sore about that, you know.

But since we know the situation some of our members said, "Okay, let's not fight them, let's work together with them but keep our identities. So we would join them as a cooperative, not as [individual] members." So we kept our identity as Kona Macadamia Nut Cooperative. We sold together with them and that's how we got involved with the Sunset Cooperative.

MK: Then I noticed that four years later, 1972, you became supervisor for Sunset?

YT: Yeah.

MK: And you worked there for four years, how did you get involved with Sunset?

YT: When we start selling the nuts together with Sunset, they insisted that instead of we husk the nuts here at the Kona Macadamia Nut Cooperative, instead of run two mills for husking, economically they claim that if you run at one place it would be more economical. So for that reason we send our milling up there and Kona Macadamia Nut Co-op members' nuts were taken down to Sunset. For that reason I was employed as a supervisor down there.

MK: Was this Sunset Co-op much larger than the Kona Co-op that originally started?

YT: At the time that we moved I think we were about, we were bigger than Sunset. I don't know, even now I think, they still keep the identity. I'm still a member but not as an active member of the Kona Macadamia Nut Co-op.

MK: Again, this Sunset Co-op, what were its duties?

YT: It . . .

MK: The same thing as Kona Macadamia Nut Co-op?

YT: Well, the Sunset Cooperative went out and collect the nut from the farmers, husk the nut and the processed nut. Some of the farmers they husk their own so the duty of the cooperative was to collect the nut at one place and husk the nut and the husked nut was dried and was cracked at Sunset. Then all the nut of the both cooperative were sold together.

MK: Did the cooperative have some kind of agreement with just one market or several markets?

YT: At that time had only one market and was also in, it's a contract, for ten years.

MK: And was that market's name?

YT: Hawaiian Host.

MK: Hawaiian Host?

YT: Yeah. So they have another one year, two years more I think. I think the contract will expire in '82, I think.

MK: Are the prices all set then, for the whole ten-year period?

YT: No, the price was negotiable every year.

MK: So it would depend on the prevailing prices?

YT: Right, right.

MK: So would that be similar to coffee prices then? The way the co-op sells to Superior?

YT: The Superior Tea, coffee price was such that you go according to the world market, not the world market but based on Columbian prices. Five cents above the Columbian prices was the very start, right now it's 20 cents above the Columbian price.

The macadamia nut, we don't have that world market price so the price was sort of controlled by the buyer. Hawaiian Host is one of the buyer and we have Menhune and Honokaa and Keaau. But the biggest buyer is Hawaiian Host, Honokaa and Keaau. Keaau and Honokaa price is sort of slightly lower than Hawaiian Host. But these three buyers are the sort of price fixing, not the group but they are the ones that sort of stabilize the buying price.

But there's a lot of small buyers besides these three and there's a lot of inquiries from the Mainland that they want the macadamia nut. But the Mainland people it's hard to predict locally whether they are promising buyers or not. That's something that the local farmers have to be alert about it. But lately the macadamia nut market got so strong that, gee, the Mainland people are really offering the price.

So Hawaiian Host has a ten-year contract, they're controlling the price as of now. Every year they negotiate the price then the price, the two group cannot come to a conclusion so they have to arbitrate. So every year the price is set through arbitration.

MK: So it's a little bit different from coffee then?

YT: Yeah, so if the buyer said, "Okay, we offer that price of what you guys are asking for," then you don't have to go through the arbitration. But if the buyer says no and the seller says this is the

price. So the seller is not picking up the price reluctantly. You have to have some sort of market price before you can present a price to negotiate. But the buyer says that market price is unreliable so you have to go through the arbitration.

MK: And for the arbitration, who is involved? In the actual negotiation?

YT: Actually I don't know too much about it but the buyer will put out his arbitrator and the seller will put out his arbitrator. And there must be one neutral chosen by these two arbitrators or seller and buyer. So these three arbitrators will study the market and say, "Okay, this is the price that should be sold, should be bought." And that will become the year's price.

MK: I noticed that four years later in 1976 you started working as a supervisor for the Pacific Co-op and I was wondering, did the Pacific Co-op and Sunset Co-op ever sort of get together and negotiate with the market?

YT: No. The Pacific Coffee Co-op have no contract with nobody in the marketing so Pacific Coffee Co-op have to find their own market. The very start the Pacific Coffee Co-op sold to Hawaiian Host with our price that our managers asked for. But later they didn't want to meet our price so right now we're not selling to the Hawaiian Host, we're selling elsewhere.

MK: Pacific Co-op is selling elsewhere?

YT: Yeah.

MK: And I noticed that Sunset and PCC [Pacific Coffee Cooperative], they both do coffee and macadamia nuts, yeah?

YT: Yeah.

MK: Nowadays, in your judgment, which one is more important economically, coffee or macadamia nuts for the co-op?

YT: For the cooperative?

MK: Yeah.

YT: Gee, it's hard to determine which side is more important. To me, I would think that if you have a good management, I think macadamia nuts is much more important than coffee. The coffee, too, right now, it's in a situation where we have to fight the new buyer [United Coffee Co.] so the manager has to be real alert in what's happening and all that.

The macadamia nut, too, gee, within two years' time Hawaiian Host will be out of the contract and if Hawaiian Host go out of the contract then the Kona Farmers Cooperative will have to go out and find the market. I think there'll be quite a difficulty in finding

the market. They said there's a lot of corresponding concerning the market where people, people or company want to buy the macadamia nut. But to find an established company that will pay a good price for the macadamia is something that, you know, hard to find, I guess. See, like Hawaiian Host already well established with all the capital, I don't know how many million dollars they have spent for the mill and all that but they are well established. So we know that they can handle all the macadamia nuts.

But if see, like in the Mainland, practically none of the buyers have a factory made for making candy or roasting so they're interested in buying the macadamia nut. But, like, okay, we'll sell you then they have to invest big amount of money to handle this macadamia nut. So how do the buyers know how much quantity they can get in the future is the problem because with the past experience the local producer will not sign a contract saying that, "Okay, we'll give you ten years of x number of quantity." We know that it's going to fluctuate so how can they, without knowing how much quantity they can get, go into a big investment.

If like, Keaau or Honokaa have a big acreage of orchard in here then they can go into that kind of investment because they know that they can get nut here.

END OF SIDE TWO

SIDE ONE; TAPE NO. 9-56-2-81

MK: Okay, we were talking about the co-ops and their arbitration with the markets and you were saying that Hawaiian Host is a stable company to do business with but there are Mainland ones now that are not so stable?

YT: Well, I'm not saying that Hawaiian Host is stable and the Mainland one is not stable. This is my general idea that I acquire by listening to all the people that I had so it's only my thinking. But as of now I'm not too sure how much the Mainland people are able to buy the nuts. They said that they can buy any amount but that remains to be seen.

MK: You've already been in macadamia nut growing, marketing for at least, the growing since the 1940's and in co-op work since, let's see, since 1961. And I was wondering, in your opinion, how has macadamia nut growing, the cultivation of macadamia nuts, changed during all these years?

YT: Well, in Kona it's growing real rapidly because the work involved in macadamia nut is not as much as coffee. If you have a person from maybe from Oahu or some other area where coffee or macadamia nut is not grown come to Kona and then go out and secure harvesting job that coffee picking price is someplace around \$15 a bag. That sounds real good price for local people but to the newcomers,

when you tell \$15 a bag and then you let them go out in the orchards and pick the coffee, the amount of earning that they can get from picking coffee is real limited. They're not experience and the berries are real small so probably at the very peak of the season they might be able to pick two bags, that's \$30 a day. But I feel that not too many people would be able to pick two bags within eight hours.

Whereas, on the macadamia nut, the size of the macadamia nut is much more bigger and you pick up the nut from the ground. As of now the picking price, harvesting price is about \$5 a bag. So if they can pick five bags that means \$25 a day. And in the season without any, too much of an experience I think they can pick up about five bags or more. Some of the families pick double of that. But averagely, I think about five bags a day.

Coffee, I doubt that on average they can pick two bags a day during the season. The coffee season will not last too long, maybe about two weeks or so. Of course, the season, picking season is about three to four months but real season that they can pick within eight hours, two bags is the very limited days.

So the amount that they can, if the person goes out and pick either coffee or macadamia nut, the macadamia nut get far better chance than picking coffee. So right now the amount of labor that we can get for the macadamia nut is far greater than the labor that we can get for picking coffee. So for that reason I feel that the amount of the macadamia nut is expanding. On the coffee it's not expanding it's diminishing but on the macadamia nut it's expanding greatly.

MK: Is the macadamia nut farms sort of hurting the coffee farms then, by competing for the labor?

YT: No, I don't think so it's hurting the coffee farm because regardless whether the macadamia nut is producing or the macadamia not producing either, coffee picking is such that it takes a lot of, I don't know what you call, endurance or whatever it is. So if the newcomer pick about half a bag or 50 pounds or 100 pounds, it takes so long a time that they will say, "Oh shucks, this is monotonous, the work."

So in the early days some haole people from the Mainland they said, "Oh, I used to work on a strawberry farm or pick cherries so I'm used to that kind of job so I can do the coffee picking," but none of them in my experience were able to keep on picking coffee for weeks or months. They pick for one day, two days and then they quit.

But on macadamia nut it's a different story. They can, fill up a bucket within a matter of five minutes or so during the real season. They can pick up so at the very start it's kind of fun. Of course if you pick up for one full day with full speed your body

get all tired up but it's the starting. It doesn't discourage the harvester.

Not as coffee, the coffee they get tired and they say this is too much monotonous kind job so they quit on picking coffee. But macadamia nut we have a lot of newcomers from the Phillipine Islands picking macadamia nuts. We ask them, "How come you not picking coffee?"

They say, "Picking coffee hard."

MK: And I was wondering, how do you think the marketing end of the macadamia nut industry has changed so far, buying and selling of the nuts?

YT: Well, the selling of the nut, gee, there's a lot of buyers so selling I think no problem. For collecting the money that you sold is another problem that the manager or whoever the seller is have to be on the watch out. But as far as selling I think no problem.

MK: And I know that you stopped coffee farming in 1947, why did you stop coffee?

YT: Too much labor in picking.

MK: And now how many acres in macadamia nuts do you have?

YT: Right now I have only 9.4 acres.

MK: And the land that you were growing the macadamia nuts on, is it fee simple or lease?

YT: Originally it was leased but the landlord offered me to buy and I bought it.

MK: From whom did you buy it?

YT: Kealakekua Ranch.

MK: And that's the land that you're on now, right?

YT: Right.

MK: And are you leasing any other land or planning to expand?

YT: I had leased land but I sold them all. At the present I have only this land.

MK: Since you've been in macadamia nuts for so long, I was wondering, what do you think of yourself as a macadamia nut farmer as compared to being a coffee farmer?

YT: Well, one thing for sure that it's not going to tie me down during the coffee season day after day in harvesting. The income from the macadamia nut is far less than from the income of the coffee of that same size orchard but the labor involved is much less than coffee. So it's a lot more better to be a macadamia nut farmer than a coffee farmer.

MK: I was wondering, coffee growing, you have the season where you have to pick intensively, yeah?

YT: Yeah.

MK: How about macadamia nut growing, is there one period in the year where you have to pick up all the nuts?

YT: At the starting of that macadamia nut industry, some emphasis was said that, you can leave the macadamia nuts for x-number of period but lately, after working in the macadamia nut husking plant, I find that we need to harvest almost every other week to get a better quality. But on the coffee, if you miss picking at the right time then you lose the whole crop. But on the macadamia nuts you have some leeway where you can leave the macadamia nut on the ground for couple days. And if it's dry season then you can leave it much longer period. But one fault we have right now is that the farmers think that you can leave the macadamia nut for two months or so on the ground. But that's the big mistake that the farmers are doing to leave that macadamia nuts on the ground too long. It really deteriorates the quality of the nut. But there is some farmer that leaves the macadamia nuts on the ground for couple of months. Those farmers they have coffee and macadamia nuts so they have to harvest the coffee first and tackle that macadamia nut. But we find that the quality of the nut is poorer than the farmers that harvest the nut every week or every other week.

MK: And now, when you compare the time you were just coffee farmer and nowadays when you are a macadamia nut farmer, do you have more free time?

YT: Oh yeah. With my acreage now, I have a lot more free time. Coffee, during that off season you have a lot of free time. If you are only in the coffee then you have more free time than macadamia nut because the macadamia nut, as the tree grows older, you'll be producing almost every month. You have to harvest almost every month [even though] harvest is very minimal. But then again you have the leaf problem, the weed problem. The weed problem is almost equivalent to the orchard with coffee. But on the leaf problem you have to take care of [clear away] the macadamia nut leaf whenever you go out and harvest. Or if you don't take care of the leaf then when the season start you're going to get into problems with the tremendous amount of leaves. So constantly, if you want the good quality of nut, especially in the off season, you have to control the leaf. So overall the macadamia nut have more job than coffee but the coffee, during the harvesting season is the problem that you face.

MK: And you were saying earlier that there is a problem with labor, yeah?

YT: Yeah, because as I mentioned before, if we had enough coffee pickers, the coffee will be far greater income than macadamia nuts per acre base.

MK: And I was wondering, what do you see for the future?

YT: A lot of people predict that coffee will not go out of existence. I emphasized to the Mainland buyers that in the near future the coffee is going out of existence. And he said that he didn't think so because the macadamia nut, you can go without eating, coffee, the public is so used to with coffee that they have to have coffee in their daily use. So macadamia nuts may go out of existence but coffee will never. For centuries the coffee has been, you know, from the real early stage they mentioned about coffee. Today still coffee is existing so he claims that coffee will not go out of existence.

In Kona there might be a time when they will have no coffee but I doubt there will be no coffee in Kona because the coffee is so easily grown in Kona. Then probably there'll be a lot of backyard farmers who will have a couple trees and then harvest for one year's family use. So as of what the Mainland buyer said, the coffee will not go out of existence. I think that is very true.

MK: How about macadamia nuts?

YT: On the macadamia nuts, gee, hard to say. I'm not economist so I don't know but as long as the economy of the United States is good, I don't think so the macadamia nuts will go out of existence. But we find that many other countries are going into macadamia nut pretty strongly. If this country starts producing a vast amount of quantity, that we'll start exporting from the United States I think the price may come down but that remains to be seen. Many things are not known as of now. Like some countries they are planting right now, we do not know how strong the wind is at that country. And if they have occasionally hurricane then that will sort of damage the tree or get out of existence because it's not profitable. But those areas is the area that remains to be seen what the other countries can produce or cannot produce.

MK: And I know that you've lived in Kona all your life, 67 years, yeah?

YT: Yeah.

MK: What do you think about your 67 years in Kona? Your life here?

YT: Oh, well, I don't know what the real meaning of the question is but as far as I'm concerned, as of 1970, was start getting into good financial situation. But until that time we were, I was in such that we were just break even so. Gee, I think it's the overall,

overall country's economy that, you know, it will tell you whether you were successful or if you enjoy being in these United States or not. Lately, the whole situation is sort of changed. I don't know, in the Mainland, United States. But in Hawaii, of course, there is some poor people but in overall the wages came up, the industry promising and every place start developing. If you are willing to work then I think there's a lot of chance to make money.

Because of that kind of situation came along I think like in Honolulu, how much the houses [costs] is coming up and then, gee, everytime I go to Honolulu and see the houses come up and then see all the houses are sold out, I would think how the hell this thing is happening but it's really happening. So I feel that the economy has changed in such that majority of the people is able to acquire land, house and lot. But in the 50's and 60's, they were, there's a lot of chance that you can acquire land far cheaper than what it is now. But the land or house that they can acquire right now, it is because the economy has changed, I guess.

MK: I was wondering, you've been here so long and you've been through bad times and good times, what made you stay in Kona despite all the bad times you went through?

YT: During the bad times I couldn't move so I was forced to stay in Kona.

MK: So that's why you stayed here 67 years?

YT: Uh huh.

MK: And my last questions is, in terms of your children that you have, you have three girls and one boy?

YT: Mm hmm [Yes].

MK: What do you hope for them, in the future?

YT: In the future, the Japanese style is that, what do you call, you leave everything for the children. They try work hard and they leave for the children. They wish that, or they try to train the children in such that in the future it will be [a certain way]. But I feel that you cannot control the children as much as what you think you'd like to control. And then even you want them to be in a good position, if you cannot support them to get into that position it's your ability. So my thinking is you should worry about that but I think the main thing is to have them well educated. Then the thing is, if you educate the children as of what you should and from there on I think it's their ability or their responsibility to get whatever they want to. If they want to be lazy and they have the education and if they don't want to use the education to get some money then that's their business not the parents. You cannot tell them you should do this, you should do that and if they don't do, then how can we control it. So I think beyond that is, we'd like to see them in successful position but I

think you cannot push them to do this or to do that. I think as long as we give them the education then from there on it's their kuleana.

MK: And I know that most of your children are in Honolulu?

YT: Yeah.

MK: Would you like them to have stayed in Kona?

YT: I would like to have them in Kona but on the other hand they come to Kona and they cannot make money as much as what they are earning. So why should we ask them to come back to Kona?

MK: So the comparable jobs aren't here, yeah?

YT: Yeah.

MK: Well, I think for today that's it and thank you very much.

YT: I thank you very much for interview.

END OF INTERVIEW

A SOCIAL HISTORY OF KONA

Volume I

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**Ethnic Studies Program
University of Hawaii, Manoa**

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